(RCGM) set up under the 1989 Rules in the Department of Biotechnology for testing under laboratory conditions and confined field conditions. Thereafter, approval of GEAC is required for large scale field trials and introduction in the environment. This evaluation process is not cumbersome and protracted, and is necessary to adequately address the safety concerns of release of such GM products into the environment.

Protests against BT Cotton

†3374. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA':
SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EN VIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the farmers have refused to use Bt cotton and other genetically modified seeds and some people have protested against permission for its commercial cultivation;

(b) if so, the details regarding the reasons advanced therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Genetic Engineering Approval Committee is doing the experimental investigation with regard to the harm likely to occur due to its production and the impact of its use on animals;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether Government would stop the use of oil of Bt cotton seeds and its oil cake?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The conditional approval for commercial cultivation of Bt cotton by Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO) has been by and large welcomed by various interest groups, including farmers' organizations, because of the improved economic benefits of cultivation of Bt cotton owing to reduced use of insecticides, control of target insect pests and improved yield. Some individuals, however, have expressed apprehensions about this new technology, particularly in relation to small farmers.

(c) to (e) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) set up under the Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells, 1989, notified under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 is responsible for

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

according approvals for genetically modified organisms. For evaluating the effect of Bt cotton, feeding experiments on poultry, fish, cows and buffaloes were conducted at National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Kamal on lactating cows; Department of Animal Nutrition, College of Veterinary Sciences, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar on lactating buffaloes; Central Avian Research Institute (CARI), Izzatnagar on poultry; and Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai on fish. These studies showed that the Bt cotton seed meal is nutritionally equivalent to and as wholesome and safe as, the non-Bt cotton seed meal. Studies conducted on refined oil obtained from Bt cotton seed have indicated that the refined oil did not show any detectable presence of Bt protein or DNA.

Green Belt programme for pollution abatement

3375. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently launched a new programme, namely Green Belt, for abatement of pollution and environment improvement in selected cities/towns, with a view to reduce adverse effects of air, water and noise pollution;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of cities/towns selected under the programme, State-wise, particularly in Andhra Pradesh;

(d) what are the guidelines/parameters for selection of various cities/ towns under the programme; and

(e) the total amount earmarked and spent under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) to (e) The Government have undertaken a pilot project on Green Belt for Abatement of Pollution and Environmental Improvement to reduce the adverse effects of air, water and noise pollution in five cities/towns of Tamil Nadu *viz.* Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Salem and Tirunelveli. The project involved raising and planting 294000 saplings in the five cities/towns at **a** total cost of Rs. 4.557 crores of which Rs. 4.00 crores was funded by Government of India and Rs. 0.557 crores by Government of Tamil Nadu. Similar proposals have been invited from other States also.